

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-4 and 6 are all the claims pending in the application. Claim 5 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer and claim 6 has been newly added herewith.

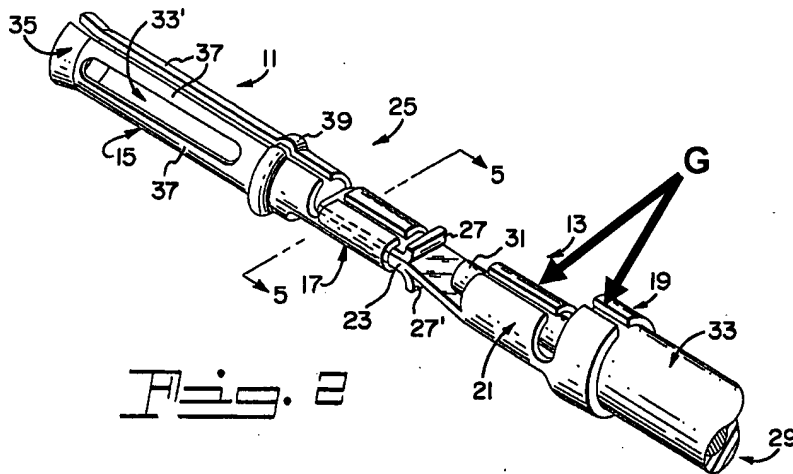
**Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103**

**Claims 1, 3 and 4**

Claims 1 and 3-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gipe (U.S. Patent No. 4,031,614) in view of Applicant's Art (APA). Claim 5 has been canceled, rendering its rejection moot. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of the remaining claims as follows.

Claim 1 recites that the connecting member includes an outer peripheral portion having a continuous cylindrical shape. Claim 1 further recites compressing the outer peripheral portion of the connecting member. For example, see the connecting cap 10 shown in the non-limiting embodiment of Figs. 1 and 2 of the present application. As is seen in these figures, the outer peripheral portion of the connecting member (cap 10) has a continuous cylindrical shape. The cap can then be radially compressed and shaped uniformly (*see* page 13, lines 6-24).

In contrast, Gipe does not teach a connecting member which includes an outer peripheral portion having a continuous cylindrical shape. As shown in Fig. 2 below, the alleged connecting member in Gipe (elements 19 and 20) do not have an outer peripheral portion having a continuous cylindrical shape. Instead, they clearly have gaps (labeled "G" by Applicant) at their upper ends.



Therefore, Gipe neither discloses neither a connecting member with a peripheral portion which has a continuous cylindrical shape nor does it disclose compressing such a connecting member as claimed. The APA does not correct these deficiencies of Gipe. Accordingly, claim 1 is allowable over the combined teachings and suggestions of Gipe and the APA. Claims 3 and 4 depend from claim 1 and are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 1.

### Claim 2

Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gipe in view of the APA and further in view of Hsieh (U.S. Patent No. 4,998,344). Applicants respectfully traverse.

Claim 2 depends from claim 1. The Examiner cites Hsieh only as showing rotary swagging. Even if it were appropriate to modify Gipe with Hsieh as suggested by the Examiner, Hsieh still would not correct the above-noted deficiencies of Gipe and the APA with respect to claim 1. Accordingly, claim 2 is allowable at least by virtue of its dependency.

**New Claim**


Applicants have added new claim 6 in order to provide a more varied scope of protection. Claim 6 is allowable at least by virtue of its dependency from claim 1 and is supported at least by the non-limiting embodiment of the connecting cap 10 shown in Figs. 1 and 2 of the present application.

**Conclusion**

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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